

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9543

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8614

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S HEALTH

REF: MOSCOW 8417

1. FRENCH AMBASSADOR VIMONT INFORMS US THAT AT LUNCHEON GIVEN JUNE 2 FOR VISITING FRENCH GENERAL MAURIN, MARSHAL GRECHKO TOLD MAURIN THAT BREZHNEV HAD BEEN IN HOSPITAL FOR TWO WEEKS. GRECHKO AND KULIKOV STATED THAT BREZHNEV'S INDISPOSITION WAS REASON WHY MAURIN WAS NOT RECEIVED BY BREZHNEV.

2. VIMONT SAID FRENCH WERE SURPRISED THAT GRECHKO AND KULIKOV WERE AT SOME PAINS TO COMMENT ON BREZHNEV'S INDISPOSITION SINCE THERE WAS NO PREVIOUS INDICATION GIVEN EITHER FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY THAT BREZHNEV WOULD RECEIVE GENERAL MAURIN. FRENCH CURIOSITY WAS ALSO STIMULATED BY THEIR RECOGNITION THAT SOVIETS GENERALLY ARE DISINCLINED TO TALK ABOUT ILLNESS OF ANY OF THE PARTY OR GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

3. COMMENT: BREZHNEV'S RECORD OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES DURING MAY BELY THE ASSERTION THAT HE WAS HOSPITALIZED FOR TWO FULL WEEKS. IT IS TRUE, HOWEVER, THAT HE DID
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NOT APPEAR IN PUBLIC BETWEEN MAY 25 AND JUNE 2, AND HE

TOLD GOVERNOR HARRIMAN THAT HE SUFFERED FM BURSITIS IN LATE MAY (REFTEL. AUSTRIANS WERE TOLD THAT HE HAD INFLUENZA DURING THIS PERIOD. ON JUNE 4 BREZHNEV LOOKED VIGOROUS BUT A LITTLE TIRED. HIS LONG INTERVIEWS WITH VISITORS (KENDALL, HARRIMAN - TWO AND THREE HOURS, RESPECTIVELY) INDICATE AT LEAST A SATISFACTORY LEVEL OF STAMINA.

4. FRENCH PERCEPTIONS ARE CORRECT IN THAT SOVIETS GENERALLY AVOID DISCUSSIONS OF LEADERSHIP SICKNESS. WE HAVE NO EXPLANATION FOR THIS BREACH OF TRADITION BY GRECHKO AND KULIKOV, BUT BREZHNEV'S CURRENT PUBLIC RECORD DOES NOT SUGGEST SERIOUS ILLNESS OR INCAPACITY FOR SUMMIT MEETING.
STOESSEL

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